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Message Text

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63
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 /070 W
---------- 053471
R 271842Z JAN 75
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6193
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY ROME

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PLAB
SUBJECT: HUMAN SIDE OF UNEMPLOYMENT

REF: PARIS 30570 DEC 19, 1974

1. UNEXPECTED BYPRODUCT OF RECENT PTT STRIKE HAS BEEN LIGHT IT SHED ON WHAT LIES BEHIND STATISTICAL UNEMPLOYMENT FIGURES. THE FACTS AS TOLD PRIVATELY BY F.O. ARE AS FOLLOWS:

2. IN AN ATTEMPT TO REDUCE PRESUMED HARDSHIP BECAUSE OF NON-DELIVERY OF UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFIT CHECKS, FORCE OUVRIERE PREVAILED IN THIRD WEEK OF PTT STRIKE UPON DIRECTORS (FORMER FO OFFICERS) OF UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE OFFICES IN TOULOUSE, CLERMONT-FERRAND AND PERPIGNAN TO DISPATCH PAY CLERKS TO COMMUNITIES WITH SIZABLE GROUPS OF UNEMPLOYED TO DISTRIBUTE PERSONALLY THE CHECKS. ALTHOUGH RELUCTANT BECAUSE OF ADDITIONAL COSTS AND RISKS, DIRECTORS AGREED.

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3. HOWEVER, DESPITE MAJOR PUBLICITY EFFORT THROUGH

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NOTICES IN CITY HALLS, UNION OFFICES AND LOCAL NEWSPAPERS ANNOUNCING AVAILABILITY OF PAY CLERKS AND CHECKS ON A GIVEN DAY OF THE WEEK, NO MORE THAN 28 PERCENT REPEAT 28 OF THOSE ENTITLED TO BENEFIT CHECKS CAME TO CLAIM THEM. IN NONE OF THE SMALL CITIES IN WHICH THIS EXTRA SERVICE WAS MADE AVAILABLE THIS PERCENTAGE EXCEEDED 37.

4. A QUICK UNOFFICIAL SURVEY DISCLOSED THAT A NUMBER OF THOSE REPORTED AS JOBLESS HAD FOUND OTHER JOBS OR RETURNED TO AGRICULTURE. REGARDLESS OF REASON, HOWEVER' THE OBVIOUS CONCLUSION OF THIS EXPERIENCE, WHICH TURNED OUT TO BE EMBARRASSING TO BOTH FO AND THE DIRECTORS OF UNEMPLOYMENT OFFICERS INVOLVED, IS THAT NO LESS THAN 72 PERCENT OF THOSE REGISTERED AS UNEMPLOYED WERE NOT DEPENDENT UPON UNEMPLOYMENT CHECKS FOR THEIR LIVELIHOOD.

5. THE MORAL OF THE STORY IS TWOFOLD: (A) UNEMPLOY-MENT IS ONE OF THE MORE ELUSIVE SOCIAL INDICATORS; AND (B) IT IS ONE THING TO COMPUTE FIGURES OF UN-EMPLOYMENT AND STILL ANOTHER TO ASSESS ITS REAL SOCIAL AND HUMAN DIMENSION. THIS GOES A LONG WAY TOWARDS EXPLAINING WHY THE MAGIC FIGURE OF UN-EMPLOYMENT, WHICH CONSTITUTES A THRESHOLD OF WORKER PATIENCE AND DISCIPLINE, IS SO ELASTIC AND SPECULATIVE.
RUSH

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